

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-2 and 5-8 are pending. Claim 9 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claim 1 is independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that canceling claim 9 automatically places the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicants did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Allowable Subject Matter

In the latest Office Action the Examiner states that claims 1-2 and 5-8 are allowed. Since claims 1-2 and 5-8 have been presented without amendment and claim 9 has been cancelled, it is believed that the present application is in condition for allowance.

Acknowledgement of Information Disclosure Statement

It is gratefully appreciated that the Examiner has acknowledged the Information Disclosure Statement filed on July 27, 2001.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yuichiro et al. (JP 11-230934). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As noted above, claim 9 is canceled. Accordingly, the Examiner's rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103 has been rendered moot.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

Application No. 09/890,097
Amendment dated June 29, 2004
Reply to Office Action of March 29, 2004

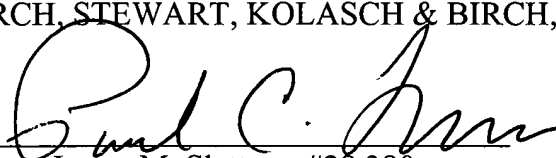
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By


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